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Hangar + airstrip + pool = big tax bill

Craig Fritz/The New Mexican

Jeffrey Epstein owns this estate south of Galisteo that the county says is worth $33 million. Epstein says the value is actually $30 million — a difference of $20,000 in property taxes.

▶ *New York financier sues Santa Fe County over property taxes, saying his estate is overvalued*

By ELENA VASQUEZ
The New Mexican

The sun bouncing off the rooftop of a Manhattan millionaire's estate south of Galisteo is like a sparkling diamond embedded in a hilltop. The reflection, which is visible from miles away, comes from what may be the largest home in the state, said Santa Fe County Assessor Benito Martinez.

The source of the eye-catching gleam is the estate and 10,000-acre ranch owned by Jeffrey Epstein, head of J. Epstein & Co., a money-management company in New York City.

The Manhattan millionaire has business ties to Leslie Wexner, founder of The Limited, which owns the Express, Lerner New York, Structure, Lane Bryant, Bath & Body Shop and Victoria's Secret.

Epstein also dated Ghislaine Maxwell, a daughter of the late media tycoon Robert Maxwell.

Epstein bought the property from former Gov. Bruce King in 1993 and dubbed it Zorro Ranch. He added an airplane hanger, airstrip and seven structures to the property, including a 26,700-square-foot hilltop mansion overlooking a canyon and a valley.

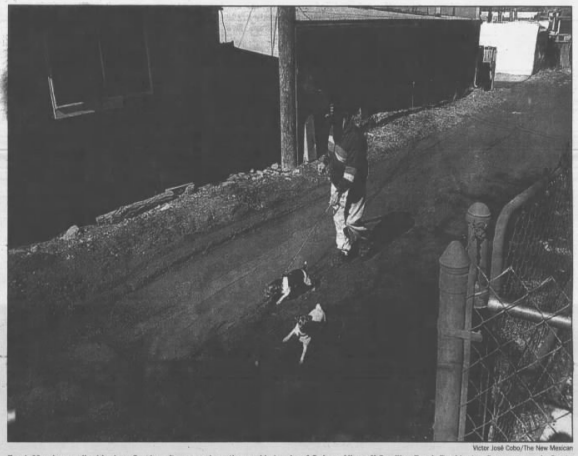
But Epstein's beautiful views and extravagant living quarters weren't enough to keep him from wincing when he received a bill for $183,502.64 in property taxes last November. Epstein paid half the bill, which was due Dec. 10, and he intends to pay the other half, which is due May 10.

The full property value stated on the bill was $33,323,725.

But the New York financier wants the county to give some of his money back. Epstein thinks he's being overcharged by about $20,000 and

Please see **BILL**, Page A-4

Roads suffer from melting snow



Victor José Cobo/The New Mexican

Frank Mendoza walks his dogs Sunday afternoon along the muddy tracks of Cubero Alley off Cerrillos Road. Residents of some areas in Santa Fe County are complaining of messy, impassable roads and driveways because of a wet winter and warmer temperatures.

Sticks *in the* Mud

Recent thaw finds many county residents spinning their wheels

By MARISSA STONE
The New Mexican

Around Northern New Mexico, it has been a waiting game: Waiting for the mud to dry so dirt roads will be functional once again.

An Española Public Schools bus driver has been unable to pick up students on county roads 86A and 89 in Río Arriba County in Chimayó. The students' parents have to drive them to nearby stops on a passable road.

Meanwhile, Francis Zarolinski said her road, County Road 89 in Chimayó, gets lower every year because water from melted snow runs down it and erodes the surface. "Our car gets stuck. It's muddy. Sometimes it's like a river – sometimes it's like driving upstream."

"All of Chimayó is full of drainage problems," said Assistant Río Arriba County Manager Tomás Campos. He said many of the town's roads are old arroyos that were converted into streets.

"There's no place to send the water except down the road," said Campos. "We're throwing (gravel) on them, trying to get the mud to stiffen out."

Santa Fe County's dirt roads are in a bad state as well.

"I could go on and read every road in our inventory, and most are in muddy conditions," said Robert Martinez, Santa Fe County deputy director of public works.

A Lone Butte resident who lives off County Road 44, Richard Samaniego said his and his family's four cars have gotten stuck during and after recent snowstorms.

"Everyone in my house missed work at least once because of the snow," Samaniego said. "It would be nice of them to plow those roads when it needs it. I've gotten stuck because of the mud and because of the snow."

The county plowed the dirt roads near his house twice during recent snowstorms, said Samaniego. "But once they plowed it just after it started snowing, so it didn't do much good."

There was mud trouble at the opposite end of Santa Fe County as well.

John Marlowe, 551 Camino San Acacio, said his muddy driveway created problems for contractors working on his house last week.

"We had a couple of contractor trucks out to do some work on the house, and they really sunk in," said Marlowe. "The plumber got stuck in the driveway and kept digging himself in deeper and deeper. Finally, he got a shovel out and tried to dig himself out of a rut. I got out and shoveled some dirt under the tires to give him some traction." The plumber finally made it out of the driveway.

Santa Fe County road crews are overburdened with work after recent snowstorms — crews have had to remove snow and grade county roads.

A state of emergency was declared

Please see **MUD**, Page A-4

Speakers caution about influence of hate groups

By NANCY WATSON
For The New Mexican

Susan Seligman

New Mexico's diverse population might keep hate groups from gaining a strong foothold in the state, the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League said Sunday.

Susan Seligman of Albuquerque made her remarks at a conference, "Standing Together as Communities for Human Dignity and Respect: Responding to Hate Groups and Their Violence," that the New Mexico Conference of Churches sponsored over the weekend at Plaza Resolana in Santa Fe.

Seligman said she remains cautious about hate groups in the state, but their presence is not as strong as it was a few years ago.

"A lot of the (hate) groups that have been in New Mexico lack leadership," Seligman said.

New Mexico is home to Hispanics, Indians, Anglos and small groups of other minorities, including African Americans.

Seligman said several militias once found a home in New Mexico, but some have moved on to other places. However, she said, some militias remain in the state.

Militias, sometimes called Christian patriots, believe the U.S. government is violating the Constitution and therefore is invalid, Seligman told the audience Sunday. Many militias reportedly believe in a white Christian republic.

The New Mexico Legislature has passed two hate-crime bills, but both were vetoed by Gov. Gary Johnson. Another initiative, Senate Bill 419, is scheduled to be presented during the current legislative session. That bill addresses what it calls "bias crimes" instead of hate crimes, and promoters hope the name change will help the bill become law.

Although there appears to be a lull in the activities of hate groups in New Mexico as well as the rest of the country, the need to remain wary of their power and influence remains important, said Bill Wasmuth, the event's keynote speaker. Wasmuth, a nonpracticing Catholic priest, has spent the past 20 years dealing with hate groups.

"I believe we're facing tough times," said Wasmuth, "because many of us abandoned the political arena. I believe that democracy is at risk. It's time for us to

Please see **HATE**, Page A-2

Lobbying expenses include Aragon trip to Pebble Beach

By BARRY MASSEY
The Associated Press

LEGISLATURE 2001

An influential member of the New Mexico Legislature received a free trip last year to the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach, where Tiger Woods won in record-setting fashion.

Sen. Manny Aragon, D-Albuquerque, was the guest of one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, GlaxoSmithKline.

The tab for Aragon's four-day trip last June: $2,435, according to a report filed by the company's lobbyist last month with the secretary of state.

"The trip for Aragon, who was the Senate's president pro tem at the time, was part of nearly $374,000 in spending by lobbyists and their employers last year for food, entertainment and gifts for legislators and state officials.

Under current law, state legislators can accept gifts and other items from lobbyists and companies that have an interest in the state policies and contracts.

One government watchdog says it's time for legislators to tighten the ethical standards that apply to themselves.

Amelia Myer, state director of Common Cause-New Mexico, says the Legislature should impose a restriction on gifts to legislators.

"We have to ask ourselves as

Please see **LOBBYING**, Page A-4

Scientists reveal answers, questions on gene code

▶ *Two major journals to release multitude of researchers' reports on human DNA map this week*

Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Scientists poring over the nearly completed map of human DNA have turned up a surprising result — humans have only about 30,000 genes. That's far fewer than the 100,000 or so that were expected and barely twice as many as there are in the lowly fruit fly flitting about your kitchen.

The unexpectedly small number of genes that determine the makeup of every man, woman and child is one of the intriguing findings in a blizzard of reports to be published in this week's editions of two major research journals, *Nature* and *Science*.

This first comprehensive portrait of the human genetic code allows "some questions to be resolved and new mysteries to emerge," the lead paper in *Nature* declares.

Another highlight of the reports is renewed confirmation of the remarkable unity of humanity, regardless of race, gender or nationality.

The analysis is based on DNA from both sexes and from persons of African, Asian, Hispanic and European descent.

Every person shares 99.99 percent of his or her genetic code with all other people, a paper in *Science* reports. And people from different racial groups can have more in common genetically than people of the same race.

"It is clear that what is called 'race,' although culturally important, reflects just a few traits determined by a tiny fraction of our genes," said the author of the *Science*

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INSIDE TODAY

Sunny and mild. High 52. Low 25.

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BILL

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believes $3 million should be shaved off the total property value.

He filed a civil case in district court on Jan. 5, protesting the assessor's bill. The case is named Zorro Trust v. the County of Santa Fe.

Epstein said his property is worth only $30 million, not $33 million. He is asking for a refund of $20,251.32, plus interest from the date of payment.

Epstein's attorney filed the case in civil court in lieu of arguing the case administratively before the Santa Fe County Valuations Protest Board.

Epstein is also questioning the assessor's methods of appraising the cost of the improvements made on the property.

Martinez does not believe the outcome of this case will set a county precedent for valuing higher-priced homes in Santa Fe.

"My main objective as county assessor is that it is of the utmost importance to establish equitable assessments, whether it is a $120,000 value or a $33 million value," Martinez said. "My priority is to equitably assess all real property."

Santa Fe County Attorney Christopher Graeser filed a motion to dismiss the case Jan. 30 on procedural grounds.

The case may not go to trial until the fall, Graeser said.

Epstein made headlines locally nearly six years ago when he began building his estate in the rural town of Stanley, six miles south of Galisteo.

Back then, the financier's entire estate was estimated to be worth about $3 million. But one airstrip, one airplane hanger, one swimming pool and seven new structures later, the value of the property has significantly increased.

Much to the dismay of the owner.

If Epstein wins the case, the Santa Fe County treasurer will have 15 days from the decision date to reimburse Epstein.

But until the case is settled, Epstein is legally required to pay his property taxes. So far, he has paid $91,751.32.

Zorro Ranch has been on the county tax rolls since 1996, when the tax bill was $10,094.

The millionaire bought the property from the King family about eight years ago. The Kings used the property for cattle ranching. Currently, the property is zoned residential and uses private wells and septic tanks. Although there is no indication that Epstein wants to turn his estate into a cattle-ranching operation, Martinez said that zoning classification would reduce Zorro Ranch's property tax.

To be zoned "agricultural special method," Epstein would be required to prove that his property would have the capacity to produce an agricultural product, which includes livestock.

Epstein's attorney, Patricia Tucker, declined to comment on Epstein's behalf. Several calls to Zorro Ranch were unreturned.

Epstein is as mysterious today as he was when he began building his estate.

He apparently is a private man who has sworn his ranch employees to secrecy — making him an enigma to his 30 neighbors in the sleepy town of Stanley. One resident said her curiosity died down after many of her questions remained unanswered.

"They wouldn't tell anybody anything," said Stanley resident Addie Jo Smith, who has become friends with some of Epstein's employees. "There's a husband and wife and a child who have a house on the property. Whatever they do there is their business, so I just let it drop."

Smith was the former manager of the Landon Store in Stanley, an old-fashioned country store that operated for 70 years before closing in March last year.

"He never even darkened the door at the store," said Smith, 61. "He never wanted to associate with the Stanley bunch. He has money, and we don't."

Six years ago, the entire estate was estimated to be worth about $3 million. But one airstrip, one airplane hanger, one swimming pool and seven new structures later, the value of the property has significantly increased.

MUD

Continued from Page A-1

recently in the Santa Fe County villages Stanley and Edgewood because of heavy snowfalls. Santa Fe County will obtain funds from the state for money spent removing snow and fixing roads, said Martinez.

"The state of emergency doesn't end just because (it stops snowing)," said Martinez. "It continues until the county feels (the roads are) not a problem anymore."

Some roads in Chimayó are impassable by car.

Residents on private road 1431, near Dan's Bar on N.M. 76, found their tires sinking so deep into the mud that the underbellies of their cars touched the road's muddy surface.

Chimayó resident Zoraida Martinez, who lives on 1431, hired some men to dump sand on the muddy drive leading to her home. The workers' four-wheel-drive truck, weighed down with sand, got stuck. They called friends with a winch to pull them out.

Rio Arriba County employees are also faced with the daunting problem of the mud.

"We throw gravel, wait, watch it wash down and then wait again," said Rio Arriba Assistant County Manager Tomás Campos.

After the county lays the gravel, Campos said, more snow falls, melts and washes the gravel down the road.

George Zarolinski, a Chimayó resident who lives on County Road 89, said it would be easier for the county to pave its roads than to constantly spend money grading them.

Even so, she was optimistic. "We're glad to have the moisture, so who cares?"

"This is actually a normal winter," said Campos. "We hadn't had a decent snow in a long time."

GENE

Continued from Page A-1

paper, Svante Paabo, a German expert on evolutionary genetics.

The 40 scientific reports are the first fruits of an intensive effort by researchers around the world to make sense of — and find practical uses for — the listing of most of the 3 billion "letters" (formally known as bases) in the human genetic code.

The entire code is known as the genome. A copy of the genome, the famous double helix of DNA, is coiled up in every cell in the body. It contains the instructions for building that cell and making it do its job.

The reports, totaling hundreds of pages accompanied by colorful tables and charts, come six months after rival teams of public and private researchers around the globe announced that they separately had determined the proper order (or sequence) of 95 percent of the As, Cs, Gs and Ts that make up the human genetic alphabet.

The 16-nation public consortium, headed by Francis Collins, the director of the U.S. National Institute of Health's Human Genome Project, will publish its preliminary analysis of the genome in Thursday's edition of *Nature*, a British journal. The private team, headed by Craig Venter, CEO of Celera Genomics Corp., placed its reports in Friday's edition of *Science*, a publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The reports were not supposed to be made public until today, but a British newspaper, the *Observer*, violated the embargo on Sunday.

Although the two teams used different methods, their portraits of the genome are almost identical.

"Never before have we published a collection of papers as informative or as breathtaking in the scope of what it reveals about human life," said *Nature*'s editor in chief, Philip Campbell. "Every editor dreams of a day like today."

"We find it humbling to gaze upon the human sequence as it comes into focus," Eric Lander, a geneticist at the Whitehead Institute in Cambridge, Mass., wrote in *Nature*. "In principle, the string of genetic bits holds long sought secrets of human development, physiology and medicine. In practice, our ability to transform such information into understanding remains woefully inadequate."

Several of the reports acknowledged that sequencing the genome is only the beginning of a vast scientific enterprise. Genes, they say, are only a "parts list" for the construction of a human being.

Genes provide the instructions for making the proteins — biological compounds that are far more numerous and complicated — that do the real work of building tissues and making organs function properly.

As a result, research on proteins — known as "proteomics" — is now exploding in government, academic and commercial laboratories.

"The future belongs to proteomics," Stanley Fields, a researcher at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Seattle, wrote in *Science*.

A major puzzle in the reports is how a relatively few genes can produce the far greater number of proteins a human being requires. The latest estimates of the gene population range from 23,000 to 39,000, but the final number is expected to be around 30,000.

The low count means that a person has only twice as many genes as a fly or a worm — and only five times as many as a single-celled bacterium. A common roadside weed, thale cress, has 26,000 genes, almost as many as a person.

Several reports noted that genes can be sliced and combined in various ways, at different times and in different organs, to produce 10 or more different proteins.

"Gene number does not correlate with complexity," Venter wrote. "Rather it is the interactions within and among these sets that result in such great variations."

Other highlights of the reports in Science and Nature include:

■ Bacteria: Another surprise was the discovery that at least 223 human genes appear to have come from bacteria that infected our ancestors millions of years ago. Some of these "bacterial hitchhikers," as Lander calls them, now perform useful tasks such as producing chemicals necessary for healthy brain function.

■ Disease genes: Researchers have compiled a list of 923 genes associated with various diseases, according to a *Nature* paper by David Valle of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore.

Unfortunately, the link between genes and disease is extremely complex, and efforts to cure sickness by tinkering with genes have so far been unsuccessful.

"The notion that one gene equals one disease is flying out the window," Venter wrote.

Even when a single gene is responsible for sickness, a remedy may be hard to find. For example, the genetic flaw that causes sickle-cell disease has been known for 40 years, but doctors still don't know how to prevent or cure it.

"Most common human diseases represent the outcome of lifelong interactions between our genome and our environment," Victor McKusick, a medical geneticist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, wrote in *Science*. Such nongenetic factors as smoking, diet, exercise, and experience in the womb and early childhood are at least equally important, McKusick said.

Nevertheless, the scientists expressed confidence that the genome sequence will be a major help in diagnosing, treating and preventing disease in the future.

Paabo warned, however, about the danger of discrimination by employers or insurance companies against persons with a risk of genetic disease.

■ Addiction: The genome sequence is beginning to help scientists understand the genetic factors underlying addiction to alcohol and drugs, but no specific genes have been identified yet.

"Studies indicate that 40 to 60 percent of an individual's risk for an addiction, whether it is to alcohol, opiates or cocaine, is genetic," Eric Nestler, a psychiatrist at the University of Texas Medical Center in Dallas, wrote in *Nature*.

Chromosome news a blow to the male ego

Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Here comes yet another blow to male ego: The Y chromosome, the chunk of DNA that makes a guy a guy, is a runt, outnumbered and overshadowed by the stuff that makes a woman a woman.

This depressing (to guys) state of affairs is reconfirmed in one of the reports on the human genome to be published in this week's editions of the scientific journals *Nature* and *Science*.

As you learned in high school, every human being has 23 pairs of chromosomes, one of each pair inherited from each parent. The pairs are evenly matched, except for the set that determines gender — the X and Y chromosomes. A female has two X's, a male one X and one Y.

Everyone gets an X chromosome from Mom. If you get a Y from Dad, you become a boy. If you get an X from Dad, you become a girl.

As a result, there are three times as many X chromosomes as Y's in the world's population (two Xs in every female cell, one X in every male).

To make matters even more unequal, the X chromosome is three times bigger than the Y. It contains about 2,000 genes, compared to less than 40 on the Y chromosome.

Furthermore, the Y chromosome is subject to many more mutations than the X chromosome. This means that Dad is responsible for most of the genetic mistakes that cause disease or malformation. On the other hand, mutations are nature's way of driving evolution. Without them, we might still be jellyfish or lizards.

Some 300 million years ago, long before humans arrived on the scene, the X and Y chromosomes in reptiles were essentially equal. Since then, the Y chromosome has lost most of its genes and turned off the functioning of many others. All that remains is a handful of genes necessary to produce sperm and a few other essential functions.

The Y chromosome "has essentially hunkered down to try to protect itself during battles of the sexes with the X chromosome," said Jo Webber, an editor at *Nature*.

LOBBYING

Continued from Page A-1

an informed electorate: What do these lobbyists think they are purchasing when they pay for travel, when they pay for lavish meals and receptions? I think they are attempting to purchase access, influence and ultimately votes," says Myer.

"Of course, that's bad news for the citizens because we can't compete with the kind of expenditures that lobbyists make. We should have a ban on gifts during the legislative session in New Mexico."

Although there's no restriction on the number of gifts or meals that members of the Legislature can accept, lawmakers have imposed such restrictions on other state officials.

Members and employees of the Public Regulation Commission are prohibited from accepting "anything of value" from regulated industries, their employees or others in rate-making or rule-making cases. The agency oversees utilities, telecommunications and insurance companies. The law does allow commissioners and agency workers to accept refreshments worth no more than $5 a day.

Aragon said he was among a group of legislators from several states who attended the golf tournament courtesy of GlaxoSmithKline. Lawmakers held daily sessions to discuss healthcare issues as well as attend the 100th U.S. Open.

Aragon, who is developing legislation to help people deal with the high costs of prescription drugs, rejects suggestions that lobbyists gain influence by their spending.

"I don't think they have any on me," he says.

Mary Anne Rhyne, a spokeswoman for GlaxoSmithKline in Research Triangle Park, N.C., says Aragon was invited on the trip to Pebble Beach because "this senator was and is an important decision-maker."

Asked whether the company was trying to influence policies or legislators with such trips, Rhyne said: "We don't ask for anything in return. What we simply want to do is help be a voice in the discussion and make sure that some of the concerns that we have are heard."

Rhyne said the company favors expanding access to prescription drugs through competitive, private insurance plans rather than government mandates.

Several bills have been proposed in the Legislature to provide assistance to the elderly and poor in buying prescription drugs. Among them is a proposal similar to a discount program in Vermont, which the pharmaceutical industry is fighting in court.

Aragon's trip included three nights at a hotel, airfare, meals, travel to and from the hotel and golf course and tickets to attend the golf tournament for two days.

Pebble Beach is considered one of the world's most spectacular courses. It's on the Monterey Peninsula, 120 miles south of San Francisco, and features several holes along cliffs bordering Carmel Bay.

Woods broke a record for winning margin in a major golf championship.

Manny Aragon

Legislator's trip was part of GlaxoSmithKline's $6,035 in May-December lobbying expenses.

"I never saw Mr. Woods play," said Aragon. "I guess he didn't come by where I was at."

The trip for Aragon was part of $6,035 in spending by GlaxoSmithKline's lobbyist from May through December. The company also contributed $7,250 to the campaigns of New Mexico legislators, including $600 to Aragon.

The company's lobbyist, Gaspar Laca of Scottsdale, Ariz., did not return telephone messages left by The Associated Press over a nearly two-week period. Rhyne said the company has a policy of funneling all questions through its public-relations office rather than having lobbyists talk directly to the news media.

The company's other lobbying expenses included meals, drinks and unspecified "entertainment" for about a dozen other legislators who attended conferences in other states and committee meetings in New Mexico.

Overall, lobbyists reported spending $65,655 from May through December, most of that for receptions and dinners for legislators.

For example, a lobbyist for Sprint, the telecommunications company, paid almost $5,000 for a dinner for lawmakers at an out-of-state legislative conference. A lobbyist for the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce reported expenditures of about $6,000. More than half of that went for a trip for eight legislators to visit Kentucky to learn about its overhaul of public education.

Lobbyists spent about $309,000 from last January through April, including during last year's 30-day legislative session. That was previously reported in disclosures last year.

Correction

The film series on Spiritual Economics led by Sarah Leng-Gilliatt takes place at Isis Medicine, 401 Botulph Lane. A photo caption with a story on Page E-1 in the *The New Mexican* Sunday gave an incorrect location. Also, the film *This is What Democracy Looks Like* will be shown at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 14. The film was omitted from the list.

The New Mexican will correct factual errors in its news stories. Errors should be brought to the attention of the city editor at 986-3034.

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